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## **Sen. Rodríguez passes bills supporting veteran entrepreneurship and employment**

AUSTIN - State Senator José Rodríguez's S.B. 660 and S.B. 389, which will help promote veteran entrepreneurship throughout Texas and help veterans match their military experience with state job postings, respectively, have passed the Texas Legislature. They take effect Sept. 1, 2015.

"These bills help Texas serve veterans who want to either continue their work in public service through state government employment or contribute to their communities as small business owners," Rodríguez said. "We owe it to veterans to provide ample employment opportunities once their service is complete, and passage of these bills is one step forward in fulfilling that promise."

State Rep. César Blanco, who carried the bills in the Texas House, said: "We want to ensure our Veterans make a positive and seamless transition from military service into the workforce. These men and women served this country selflessly, and it is my hope that these proposals will help them when they return home."

More about the bills:

- **S.B. 660:** This bill helps aspiring veteran entrepreneurs by putting them in touch with specialists trained to assist clients in learning the skills necessary to become successful small business owners. The bill is part of the continued phased implementation of the Texas Veterans Commission's (TVC) Veteran Entrepreneur Program. Since this program was established in 2013, TVC has provided services to more than 2,100 veteran entrepreneurs through more than a dozen entrepreneurship seminars across the state, and through the creation of a competitive entrepreneur academy. Now, S.B. 660 will establish regional program coordinators across the state who will conduct business

training classes, advocate for business opportunities, and consult with federal agencies on behalf of veteran entrepreneurs.

- **S.B. 389**: Texas law sets forth a goal that 40 percent of state employees be veterans. However, in 2014, less than five percent of state employees were veterans. One reason for this may be veterans have a difficult time identifying state jobs for which they may be particularly qualified for because of employment experiences gained in the military. Under S.B. 389, the State Auditor's Office (SAO) will coordinate with the TVC to identify military occupational specialty codes, which are utilized by the U.S. military to identify a specific job, that match state job requirements. The SAO would make the resulting codes available on their web site, and state agencies must include matching codes on job applications.

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*José Rodríguez represents Texas Senate District 29, which includes the counties of El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. He represents both urban and rural constituencies, and more than 350 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. Senator Rodríguez currently serves as the Chairman of the Senate Hispanic Caucus, and is a member of the Senate Committees on Education; Health and Human Services; Veteran Affairs and Military Installations; Nominations; and Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs.*